WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.    A method of validating a network, the method comprising:

5          receiving user input requesting a validation process;

in response to the user input, automatically discovering attributes of devices in the network;

automatically comparing the discovered attributes

10    with a predefined set of valid device attributes; and

generating output data that indicates whether the discovered attributes match the valid device attributes.


2.    The method of Claim 1, wherein the operation of

15    generating output data comprises:

generating output data that identifies an invalid attribute among the discovered attributes and a corresponding valid attribute from the predefined set of valid device attributes.

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3.　　The method of Claim 1, wherein:

the predefined set of valid device attributes specifies valid software versions;

the operation of automatically discovering

5　　attributes of the devices comprises automatically discovering version information for software in one or more of the devices; and

the operation of automatically comparing the discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid

10　　device attributes comprises automatically comparing the discovered version information with the valid software versions.

4.　　The method of Claim 3, wherein:

15　　the software in at least one of the one or more devices comprises firmware; and

the operation of automatically comparing the discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid device attributes comprises automatically determining

20　　whether the firmware has a valid version.

5.    The method of Claim 1, wherein the operation of automatically discovering attributes of the devices comprises:

    automatically identifying a device type for at least

5  one of the devices;

    dynamically loading a validation module based on the identified device type; and

    automatically using the validation module to poll the at least one device.

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6.    The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

    automatically determining the valid device attributes by reference to a file that uses a markup language to encode the valid device attributes.

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7.    The method of Claim 6, wherein:

    the file with the valid device attributes comprises an extensible markup language (XML) file; and

    the operation of automatically determining the valid

20  device attributes comprises parsing the XML file by reference to a document type definition (DTD) file, wherein the DTD file contains definitions of data elements for validating the network.

8.    A program product for validating devices in a network, the program product comprising:

a computer-usable medium; and

computer instructions encoded in the computer-usable

5    medium, wherein, when executed, the computer instructions perform operations comprising:

receiving user input requesting a validation process;

in response to the user input, automatically

10    discovering attributes of devices in the network;

automatically comparing the discovered attributes with a predefined set of valid device attributes; and

generating output data that indicates whether the discovered attributes match the valid device attributes.

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9.    The program product of Claim 8, wherein the operation of generating output data comprises:

generating output data that identifies an invalid attribute among the discovered attributes and a

20    corresponding valid attribute from the predefined set of valid device attributes.

10.   The program product of Claim 8, wherein:

the predefined set of valid device attributes specifies valid software versions;

the operation of automatically discovering

5     attributes of the devices comprises automatically discovering version information for software in one or more of the devices; and

the operation of automatically comparing the discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid

10    device attributes comprises automatically comparing the discovered version information with the valid software versions.

11.   The program product of Claim 10, wherein:

15    the software in at least one of the one or more devices comprises firmware; and

the operation of automatically comparing the discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid device attributes comprises automatically determining

20    whether the firmware has a valid version.

12. The program product of Claim 8, wherein the operation of automatically discovering attributes of the devices comprises:

automatically identifying a device type for at least

5   one of the devices;

dynamically loading a validation module based on the identified device type; and

automatically using the validation module to poll the at least one device.

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13. The program product of Claim 8, wherein the computer instructions perform further operations comprising:

automatically determining the valid device

15  attributes by reference to a file that uses a markup language to encode the valid device attributes.

14.   An information handling system for validating a
network configuration, the information handling system
comprising:

a computer-usable medium;

5      a predefined set of valid device attributes stored
in the computer-usable medium;

a network interface in communication with a network
of devices; and

processing resources in communication with the
10   network interface and the computer-usable medium, wherein
the processing resources perform operations comprising:

receiving user input requesting a validation
process;

in response to the user input, automatically
15   communicating with the devices via the network interface
to discover attributes of the devices;

automatically comparing the discovered attributes
with the predefined set of valid device attributes; and

generating output data that indicates whether the
20   discovered attributes match the valid device attributes.


15.   The information handling system of Claim 14,
wherein the processing resources generate output data
that identifies an invalid attribute among the discovered
25   attributes and a corresponding valid attribute from the
predefined set of valid device attributes.

16. The information handling system of Claim 14, wherein:

the predefined set of valid device attributes specifies valid software versions;

5   the processing resources automatically discover version information for software in one or more of the devices; and

the processing resources automatically compare the discovered version information with the valid software

10  versions.


17. The information handling system of Claim 16, wherein the software in at least one of the one or more devices comprises firmware, and the processing resources

15  automatically determine whether the firmware has a valid version.


18. The information handling system of Claim 14, wherein:

20  the processing resources automatically identify a device type for at least one of the devices;

the processing resources dynamically load a validation module based on the identified device type; and

25  the processing resources automatically use the validation module to poll the at least one device.

19.    The information handling system of Claim 14, further comprising:

a file that uses a markup language to encode the valid device attributes, wherein the processing resources automatically determine the valid device attributes by reference to the file with the valid device attributes.

20.    The information handling system of Claim 19, wherein:

the file with the valid device attributes comprises an extensible markup language (XML) file;

the information handling system further comprises a document type definition (DTD) file that contains definitions of data elements for validating the network; and

the processing resources automatically determine the valid device attributes by using the DTD file to parse the XML file.

21.    The information handling system of Claim 14, wherein the processing resources comprise:

one or more processors; and

software which, when executed by the one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to perform the operations of receiving user input, automatically communicating with the devices, automatically comparing the discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid device attributes, and generating output data.